



## Pala Dynasty

- **For Prelims:** Prominent Ruler of Palas, Art and Architecture.
- **For Mains:** Way of administration of Palas, Palas political life and Art and Architecture.

### Who were the Palas?

- The **Pala** empire was founded by **Gopala**, probably in **AD 750**.
- **Pala dynasty**, ruling from the 8th to the 12th century.
- **Language:** Sanskrit, Prakrit and Pali.
- "**Pala**" is a **Sanskrit** word which means "**protector**". It was added to the names of the emperors, giving rise to the name "**Pala**" to the empire.
- **The Palas** were staunch supporters of **Mahayana Buddhism**.
- Various **Mahaviharas, stupas, chaityas, temples, and forts** were built.

### Who were Prominent Rulers of Pala Dynasty?

- **Gopala (750-770 AD):**
  - The **Pala dynasty** was founded by **Gopala**, who also served as the kingdom's first emperor.
  - He unified Bengal under his control, and even brought **Magadha (Bihar)** under his control.
  - The monastery at **Odantapuri, Bihar**, was founded by **Gopala**.
  - He was regarded as the first **Buddhist monarch of Bengal** after converting to the religion.
  - His reign was marked by a **tripartite struggle** between the Palas, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas for the control of Kanauj and North India.
- **Dharmapala (770-810 AD):**
  - **Dharmapala** succeeded **Gopala** as ruler in around A.D. 770.
  - Dharmapala was the second ruler of **Pala Empire**. He was the son of **Gopala**.
  - He fought a number of battles against the **Pratiharas** and the **Rashtrakutas**.
  - Dharmapala captured **Kanauj** and conducted a **grand darbar**.
  - He took the greatest imperial titles of the period, including **Paramabhattaraka, Paramesvara** and **Maharajadhiraja**.
- **Devapala (810-850 AD):**
  - **Devapala** was the son of **Dharmapala and Rannadevi**, the princess of the **Rashtrakuta** dynasty.
  - **Devapala** had expanded the empire to eastern India, including the kingdoms of **Assam, Odisha, and Kamarupa**.
  - He had constructed several **monasteries**, including temples, in **Magadha**.
  - **Devapala** carried out raids in the **north**, the **Deccan**, and the **peninsula**.
- **Mahipala I:**
  - In **988 AD**, **Mahipala-I** ascended to the throne.
  - When **Mahipala-I** came into power, the **Pala kingdom** started to flourish once again and reclaimed the northern and eastern portions of **Bengal** and **Bihar**.
  - Along with his brothers **Stirapala** and **Vasantapala**, **Mahipala-I** is thought to have

conquered **Varanasi**.

## What Kind of Politics existed under Pala Rule?

- The Pala kings (referred to as Parambhattaraka, Parameshwara and Maharajadhiraja) gave land grants to brahmanas, priests and temples. These grants were permanent.
- They also bestowed land grants on Buddhist monasteries.
- The Pala grants are specifically related to maintenance of law and order and of administration of justice.
- Land grants were also given to Kaivartas who were peasants.
- The Pala records (land charters) refer to Rajas, Rajputras, Ranakas, Rajarajanakas, Mahasamantas, Mahasamantadhipatis, etc. They were probably feudatories who were given lands in lieu of military services.
  - There is no evidence for subinfeudation under the Palas.
- Royal officials are mentioned in the inscriptions who seem to have administered the kingdom comprising Bengal and Bihar.
- Some of the titles used for Pala officials are Maha-daussadhasadhanika, Mahakartakrtika, Mahasandhivigrahika, etc.
- The Palas operated from several loci of power viz. Pataliputra, Mudgagiri, etc., all located on the Ganga.
- Villages under the Palas were grouped into units of one and ten under the charge of Gramapati and Dasagramika respectively.
- They were royal officials responsible for the administration for these units. We have very little epigraphic evidence related to service grants under the Palas.

## What kinds of Art and Architecture Flourished during Pala's reign?

- During the reign of the **Palas**, art and architecture flourished in the Indian states of **Bengal** and **Bihar**.
- The distinctive growth of **Pala Dynasty** art and architecture revealed the creation of the "**Pala School of Sculptural Art**."
- Many regional aspects of **Bengali society** might be found in the art and architecture of the time.
- The art and architecture of the **Pala Dynasty** gave importance to **terracotta, sculpture, and painting**.
- The creation of **Dharmapala**, the **Somapura Mahavihara** at **Paharpur** is one of the finest architectures of the **Pala dynasty**.
- The **Great Monastery**, also known as **Somapura Mahavira**, was a renowned intellectual hub until the **12th century**.
- **Vikramshila Vihar, Odantpuri Vihar, and Jagaddal Vihar** all have gigantic constructions that are considered to be the works of art of the Palas.
- The priceless masterpieces of **Pala Dynasty** art and architecture are on display at museums in **Bangladesh** and **West Bengal**, which are quite significant.
- Perfect **carving** and **bronze sculptures** flourished throughout this period.
- At the advanced level of architectural expansion, various **Buddhist Viharas** emerged.
- **Terracotta plaques** are another example of the **Pala period's** artistic brilliance.
  - These plaques are utilized as wall surface decoration and are recognised as one-of-a-kind works by **Bengal artists**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions Prelims

### Prelims

Q. Consider the following events in the history of India: (2020)

1. Rise of Pratiharas under King Bhoja
2. Establishment of Pallava power under Mahendravarman-I
3. Establishment of Chola power by Parantaka-I
4. Pala dynasty founded by Gopala

What is the correct chronological order of the above events, starting from the earliest time?

- (a) 2 - 1 - 4 - 3
- (b) 3 - 1 - 4 - 2
- (c) 2 - 4 - 1 - 3
- (d) 3 - 4 - 1 - 2

**Ans: (c)**

- The Pallava dynasty existed from 275 CE to 897 CE, ruling a portion of southern India. Pallavas became a major power during the reign of Mahendravarman I (571–630 CE) who ruled the Southern portion of present day Andhra region and Northern regions of what forms present-day Tamil Nadu.
- Pala dynasty reigned in Bihar and Bengal from the 8th to the 12th century. Its founder, Gopala (750-770 CE), was a local chieftain who rose to power in the mid-eighth century during a period of anarchy.
- From the middle of the eighth century the dominance over Madhyadesha became the ambition of two particular clans among tribal people in Rajasthan, known as the Gurjara and the Pratihara. According to a contemporary Arab account from 851 CE, Raja Mihir Bhoja (840–851 CE), the greatest of the Pratihara kings, was among the princes of India that battled against the Arab invaders.
- The Chola Empire was founded by Vijayalaya. The reign of the Cholas began in the 9th century when they defeated the Pallavas to come into power. The medieval period was the era of absolute power and development for the Cholas. Parantaka I (reigned 907–953) laid the foundation of the kingdom. He took the northern boundary up to Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), where his advance was stopped by a defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. Parantaka was more successful in the south, where he defeated both the Pandyas and the Gangas.

Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

### **Mains**

Q. Pala period is the most significant phase in the history of Buddhism in India. Enumerate. (2020)

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